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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DUSHANBE 001170

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY ZARIFI INDOCTRINATES AMBASSADOR

REF: DUSHANBE 1151

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, AMB, EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[11](#). (C) Summary: In an October 16 meeting, Foreign Minister Zarifi rattled off a lengthy list of Tajikistan's desires for infrastructure projects, increased trade, a softer human rights report, assistance on trafficking in persons, and help on relations with Uzbekistan. This appears to have been his misplaced effort to give us input on the Annual Bilateral Consultations (ABCs). End Summary.

TRADE AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT FOR AFGHANISTAN

[12](#). (C) Zarifi called Ambassador to a meeting to discuss "bilateral meetings." He was accompanied by newly appointed Deputy Foreign Minister Ozoda Rahmonova (the President's daughter). Zarifi first pointed to a map of Central Asia on the table and said he would make good use of it. He then commented that the recent TIFA meeting in Washington had been positive. Tajikistan would like to increase trade with the United States and specifically wanted to sell dried fruits, bottled water, and fruit juices to U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan. Tajikistan would organize an exhibition for the Defense Department if a delegation came to see what the Tajik market offered. Ambassador said he would follow up on this offer with USCENTCOM.

POWER AND RAIL LINES FROM TURKMENISTAN VIA AFGHANISTAN

[13](#). (C) Zarifi raised his and President Rahmon's recent visit to Turkmenistan, saying that Turkmenistan was interested in electric and gas lines to Tajikistan via Afghanistan, bypassing perpetually obstructive Uzbekistan. Making liberal use of the map, Zarifi said the Turkmen would finance the power and gas lines up to their border with Afghanistan, but Tajikistan was looking for our support to obtain financing for the lines through Afghanistan to link up with Tajik networks. Zarifi suggested that the United States, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and United Nations Representative Kai Eide meet to discuss these projects.

REGIONAL ROAD AND RAIL VISIONS

14. (C) Having tested the road route from Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan to Afghanistan, it was time to expand NDN operations to include rail cargo via Uzbekistan, Zarifi said. Tajikistan needs U.S. help to gain Uzbek agreement to such transit. To facilitate rail cargo movement to Afghanistan, Tajikistan would like to build intermodal rail/road facilities in Kulyob and Kholhozabad (near the Nizhny Pyanj bridge) and wants investors to build a rail line from Kholhozabad to Nizhny Pyanj. Also needed is an additional bridge across the Pyanj at Kokul, 95 kilometers east of Nizhny Pyanj, to better connect Afghan Badakhshan with Tajikistan. A new road from the border crossing at Nizhny Pyanj directly to Mazar e Sharif, bypassing Kunduz, also would help complete the grand plan to connect western China to the port of Bandar Abbas in Iran. A 600 kilometer railroad from Kunduz to Herat also should be built.

CASA-1000, DAMS, BORDER SECURITY

15. (C) Barely pausing to take a breath, Zarifi pitched the oft-discussed but never built Doshtizhum Dam on the Pyanj river, saying it would help power the region and irrigate northern Afghanistan - but Tajikistan needs U.S. support to get the Asian Development Bank to fund a feasibility study. The CASA-1000 power line to Afghanistan should go forward too. And Zarifi said that Tajikistan and the United States need to focus more on border security so that Tajikistan has the resources to properly inspect cargoes coming across the new bridges and to stop narcotics trafficking.

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UZBEKISTAN

16. (C) The problem blocking all these grand plans was Uzbekistan, Zarifi said. Uzbekistan "blocks all our ideas, even in the cultural sphere," he added. Tajikistan needs the United States' political support to convince lending institutions to finance feasibility studies for dams. Uzbekistan had filled reservoirs with water equivalent to three times the current volume of the Aral Sea, while windborne dust from the Aral seabed is coating Tajik glaciers, hastening their melting and further exacerbating water shortages in the region. Zarifi asked that the United States press Uzbekistan to reduce its inefficient cotton farming, which wasted much water. He asked that the United States urge Uzbekistan to remove landmines on its border with Tajikistan, the source of many civilian deaths and injuries.

HUMAN RIGHTS, SOME BALANCE PLEASE

17. (C) Turning to human rights, Zarifi requested that the embassy, in preparing background information for the annual Human Rights Report, consult more with the government of Tajikistan. Arguing that human rights-oriented NGOs are in the business of finding bad news, Zarifi said such sources distorted the situation in Tajikistan. "Listen to us too" he concluded.

TIP - HELP US TO HELP YOU

¶8. (C) Zarifi commented that Tajikistan was making greater efforts to fight trafficking in persons, but continues to be weak on reporting its efforts to the outside world. He asked for greater U.S. assistance to fight trafficking in persons and to better tell Tajikistan's story. Ambassador said that a representative of G/TIP would visit in the near future, and Zarifi assured Ambassador that he would do all he could to make the visit useful.

ZARIFI IS POC FOR SENSITIVE AFGHAN MATTERS

¶9. (C) Zarifi said that during President Rahmon's meeting with Special Representative Holbrooke at the United Nations General Assembly, Holbrooke had asked Rahmon to designate a point of contact for communications on "sensitive matters" related to Afghanistan. Zarifi said that President Rahmon designated him to be that point of contact.

MORE TOURISTS AND MORE STUDENTS FROM KULYOB

¶10. (C) Zarifi urged that the United States fund more student exchange programs, saying more students should travel "in both directions" between the United States and Tajikistan. At this point Deputy Foreign Minister Ozoda spoke to Zarifi in Tajiki, reminding him that the point was to get more exchange opportunities for "students from Kulyob." Zarifi translated this to us more diplomatically as a request that U.S. exchange programs counterbalance those of the Aga Khan Development Network and the Soros Foundation which, he said, "mostly select Pamiris." He also asked for USG assistance to bring more tourists to Tajikistan and financing for advertising materials, including tourist maps and guide brochures. When the Ambassador pointed out that the removal of the extra visa requirement to visit Gorno-Badakhshon would help increase tourism in that area - along with the opening of the Kulma border crossing to foreigners - Zarifi began a brief, animated discussion with Ozoda over the status of the GOTI's requirement for visas for Gorno-Badakhshon. Neither was sure where the matter stood, but they promised to get back to us.

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MILITARY MATTERS AND RUSSIANS

¶11. (C) Zarifi said the Government of Tajikistan looked forward to the next visit by U.S. military "commanders" and wished to discuss the U.S. military presence in Tajikistan. Tajikistan is talking to the Russian Government about the status of the existing Russian bases, Zarifi said without further elaboration. Ambassador informed him of the possible October 26-27 visit of Central Command Commander General Petraeus. With that, Zarifi closed the meeting, thanked the Ambassador for coming to the Foreign Ministry, and proclaimed Tajikistan ready to begin the Annual Bilateral Consultations.

THIS WAS AN ABC DISCUSSION?

¶12. (C) The Ambassador passed to Zarifi a modified list of topics for discussion at the ABC and requested that we start in-depth discussions so that both sides would be well-prepared

for the ABCs. Zarifi glanced at the list, said it "looked fine," and agreed that we could have further talks as needed. In response to the Ambassador's inquiry, Zarifi added that he would soon appoint a new director for the MFA office for North America and Europe and that this person would shepherd the ABC process for the Tajik side.

COMMENT - A MILE WIDE AND THIN ON THE STAFF WORK

¶13. (C) Like in many meetings, Zarifi covered the usual litany of issues. This was, hopefully, only his first attempt to flesh out Tajik interests in advance of the ABCs. Clearly he and the MFA have much work to do before they are prepared for these discussions, and embassy will work with them to develop a more substantive agenda than the grandiose wish list Zarifi spilled out. Presidential daughter Ozoda, now overseeing these regions as one of three deputy ministers, contributed only the request for more Kulyobis to study in the United States.

¶14. (C) Zarifi's comment on the desire for discussions on our military presence in Tajikistan may indicate the source of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Karasin's questions to Ambassador earlier the same day (Reftel) on whether the United States planned to place forces on the Tajik border with Afghanistan. Whether the two issues are in fact linked, Karasin certainly was right when he observed that the Tajiks try to play the United States and Russia off each other in an effort to get more for Tajikistan. End Comment.
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